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E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS AFTER KOREAN REUNIFICATION
TAGS: PREL PGOV PARM KNUC KS KN
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BOSWORTH'S AUGUST 23 MEETING WITH ROK
- NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR KIM SUNG-HWAN

Summary

¶11. (C) In a brief August 23 meeting, ROK National Security Advisor Kim Sung-hwan reported to Special Representative for North Korea Policy Bosworth that President Lee had told a DPRK delegation that, until the nuclear issue was resolved, there would be limits on ROK economic cooperation with the DPRK. Kim observed that it appeared the DPRK was employing its usual tactic of pursuing improved relations with South Korea in response to international pressure, but observed the North Korean delegation to the funeral of Kim Dae-jung had not received a warm welcome from the South Korean public. Bosworth emphasized the importance of balancing the parallel tracks of diplomacy and sanctions, and told Kim that the United States wanted to pursue a "measured approach" to North Korea. End Summary.

President Lee Told DPRK Delegation Nuclear Issue is Central

¶12. (C) Special Representative for North Korea Policy Ambassador Stephen Bosworth met for 30 minutes on Sunday, August 23, with ROK National Security Advisor Kim Sung-hwan. Noting that President Lee Myung-bak and Minister of Unification Hyun In-taek had held separate meetings with the DPRK delegation to the funeral of former President Kim Dae-jung, NSA Kim said the DPRK was feeling pressure from the sanctions of UN Security Council Resolution 1874. As usual when confronted with international pressure, the DPRK was attempting to reach out to the ROK. The DPRK did not want to discuss anything except economic issues, however, refusing to talk about nuclear or military issues.

¶13. (C) Kim said the DPRK delegation had repeatedly asked to meet with the President, but the ROK had waited until 10:00 p.m. Saturday night before informing them President Lee Myung-bak would see them the next morning. President Lee had asked the North Korean delegation to convey to Kim Jong-il that there would be limits on economic cooperation with the DPRK until the nuclear issue was resolved. Lee had also emphasized to the North Koreans that there was a new team in place in Washington, and Pyongyang would have to take a different approach. Kim Ki Nam, the leader of the North Korean delegation, had responded that the United States's 60-year policy of hostility to the DPRK required Pyongyang to have a nuclear deterrent.

¶14. (C) The DPRK wanted to move North-South discussions away from the nuclear issue, NSA Kim reasoned, pointing out that Presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun had not regarded the nuclear weapons program as a North-South issue. Lee, however, had clearly told the North Koreans that denuclearization was a Seoul priority. The ROK was prepared to open a dialogue with the DPRK on Mount Geumgang but would ask for a statement from Pyongyang that it would systematically protect tourists.

Cool Welcome This Time for North Korean Delegation

¶15. (C) In the past, Kim continued, North Korean delegations had received warm welcomes when visiting Seoul. This time there had been no real welcome -- people had not turned out to applaud them -- and the delegation had even seen a few

anti-DPRK demonstrators. The DPRK's actions since December of last year had changed opinions, Kim said, citing opinion polls that reported fewer than 30% of the Korean public supported assistance to North Korea or the reopening of Mt. Geumgang tours without security assurances.

U.S. Wants a "Measured Approach"

¶ 6. (C) Ambassador Bosworth observed that the present policy appeared to be effective and to be creating a new situation. Experience showed that Washington and Seoul were much more effective when we worked together. Our two governments would need to hold intensive discussions concerning our strategy for reengagement. The DPRK was unlikely to roll over and say it would return to the Six Party Talks; instead, we would have to lead them back to negotiations, although it would not necessarily have to be called the Six Party Talks.

¶ 7. (C) Ambassador Bosworth continued that a measured approach was required. We did not want to drag our feet, neither did we want to legitimize Pyongyang's assertion of nuclear status or its position that it did not have to return to the Six Party Talks. A key challenge would be maintaining balance between the two tracks of sanctions and the negotiating process. The September 2005 statement provided a very useful statement of principles for the future.

TOKOLA